

Final Rule Changes to the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Individual Fishing Quota Program: Online Account Application Requirements

Gulf of Mexico Grouper, Tilefish, and Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program

Frequently Asked Questions

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How does this final rule change the Gulf of Mexico Individual Fishing Quota Program?

- This rule establishes the requirements to collect information from all participants in individual fishing quota programs. Rulemaking has been in place to allow non-permitted participation in the red snapper individual fishing quota program since 2006.
 - NOAA Fisheries Service published a final rule implementing Amendment 26 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan in 2006, which established the Gulf of Mexico red snapper individual fishing quota program.
 - This amendment contained provisions to allow non-permitted participation in the program 5 years after program implementation.
 - As of January 1, 2012, all U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens are eligible to establish online accounts and purchase red snapper shares and allocation.
 - Prior to this date, only participants with a valid commercial reef fish permit could establish online accounts and purchase red snapper quota shares and allocation (i.e., pounds).

Why is the online account application necessary?

- The online account application is necessary to collect information from non-permitted U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens who are trying to establish online accounts.
- It is also necessary to collect citizenship information from current participants, as this information was not previously collected on permit applications, as well as to maintain up-to-date contact information for participants.

What are the changes to the individual fishing quota programs?

- Information to create and maintain an online account will be collected through an online account application. In order to participate in either individual fishing quota program (red snapper or grouper-tilefish), participants must have an active online account. Information required on the application will include:
 - Contact information (Name, address, phone number);

- Certification that the entity is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien;
 - Tax identification number.
- The online account application will be offered at no charge and all participants will be required to update the application every 2 years in order to maintain an active online account.

Who will be required to submit the application?

- To participate in the red snapper program, all non-permitted participants after January 1, 2012, will be required to submit the application in order to create an account.
- All participants in both the red snapper and grouper-tilefish programs will be required to submit the application every 2 years in order to maintain an active online account.
 - Shareholders who hold a valid federal reef fish permit will be required to submit the online account application every 2 years.
 - Shareholders who acquired shares and allocation during the first 5 years of the program, but no longer possess a valid federal reef fish permit, will be required to submit the online account application every 2 years.
 - Non-permitted participants in the red snapper program will be required to submit the online account application every 2 years.

Can a non-permitted participant purchase shares and allocation?

- Non-permitted participants will be eligible to purchase only red snapper shares and allocation (i.e. pounds). They will not be eligible to purchase grouper-tilefish shares and allocation.
- Shares held by an entity may not exceed the share cap for red snapper, 6.0203%.

Will a non-permitted participant be able to harvest and sell commercial red snapper?

- A non-permitted participant will be eligible to obtain and transfer shares and allocation of red snapper but will not be allowed to harvest and sell commercial red snapper.
- Only shareholders with a valid federal reef fish permit and sufficient allocation in their vessel account will be allowed to harvest and sell commercial red snapper.

When will these new management measures be implemented?

- Requirements for collecting information from non-permitted U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens will be implemented on or before January 1, 2012, in order to allow non-permitted participation in the red snapper individual fishing quota program.
- Letters with pre-filled applications will be mailed to current shareholders prior to January 1, 2012, in order to keep an active online account.

Related Links:

IFQ Homepage: <http://ifq.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifqgt/>

Frequently Asked Questions on Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Individual Fishing Quota Program: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/GulfReefFishIFQ.htm>